



**Central Steel Drum
Interview Summary Reports**

Work Assignment: 008

Site: 24ZZ

Prepared for:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Contract: 68-W4-0020

**TRC Environmental
Corporation**

Offices located in
major industrial centers
throughout the U.S.

1-800-TRC-5601

INTERVIEW REPORT
BARBARA C. CHOYNOWSKI
CENTRAL STEEL DRUM SITE
June 24, 1997

On June 24, 1997, Donna Murphy and Nuria Muniz of TRC Environmental Corporation (TRC) traveled to 107 Fern Avenue, Lyndhurst, New Jersey to conduct an interview with Barbara C. Choynowski, telephone (201) 939-3852, a former employee of Central Steel Drum. The following substantially summarizes the statements made by Mrs. Choynowski to TRC personnel during the interview:

Mrs. Choynowski worked at Central Steel Drum, located in Newark, New Jersey, for over 15 years, between 1979 and the facility's closing. Mrs. Choynowski was one of the last employees and she worked there until the facility was no longer operating, although she could not recall the exact date. She assisted the owners in closing down the operations of Central Steel Drum. Prior to the facility's closing, she worked in the main offices at the facility as a bookkeeper and she was responsible for a variety of tasks, including accounts payable and accounts receivable. As such, Mrs. Choynowski is familiar with the companies who brought drums to Central Steel Drum for reconditioning.

Central Steel Drum had a company rule that the employees who worked in the main office, especially the clerical staff, were not allowed to go out into the "yard" unless authorized. Mrs. Choynowski did not know why this rule was in effect but believed it was for the safety of the female employees. Although Mrs. Choynowski did not go out into the yard, she was familiar with the operations in the yard based on her responsibilities in the office.

When drums were brought into the facility for reconditioning, they went through an inspection process whereby the drums were counted and catalogued by type of drum. This was done because different prices were paid for different types of drums. This inventory was noted on a standardized form, created by Central Steel Drum, and copies of the form were given to Mrs. Choynowski at the end of the day. This form was Mrs. Choynowski's record of which companies brought in drums that day and how much the companies would be paid, based on an assessment of the number and types of drums the companies brought in. The forms also included a line item for drums that were "rejects." Reject drums were not rejected from coming into the facility; "reject" was a designation that the drum was worthless or not worth reconditioning. The company whose drums were designated as "reject" would not be paid anything for those drums. Central Steel Drum would, in turn, accept and dispose of the reject drums.

All drums coming into the facility had to contain less than "1-2 inches" of material in the drum. Mrs. Choynowski stated that she believed this to be a state regulation. Due to the nature of the business, no drums were brought to the facility "clean," or not containing any material at all. Mrs. Choynowski was not aware of the specific types of material that were brought into the facility in the drums, although she recalled that some companies brought food waste.

During the reconditioning process, drums were placed on a conveyer belt and sent to the incinerator where they were burned. The incinerator would burn out the contents of the drum and remove all excess, including the paint, from the drum. After this process, the drum would be stripped down to its original metal. The drums were then separated by type of drum, lined, if needed, and then repainted. Drums were painted according to specifications of the purchaser. In some instances, companies provided Central Steel Drum with their logo and Central Steel Drum would stencil it on.

Mrs. Choynowski estimates that approximately "100 or so" companies/individuals had accounts with Central Steel Drum and brought drums to the facility for reconditioning on a regular basis. Some companies came every day, but not all. Some of the companies maintained inventories at the Central Steel Drum facility, both buying and selling drums; some companies exclusively sold drums to the facility; and some companies exclusively bought drums from Central Steel Drum.

In addition to companies transporting drums to the facility, Central Steel Drum also would pick up drums for reconditioning from companies during the time that they were delivering clean reconditioned drums.

Hoffman LaRoche, Scranton Cooperage, National Starch, K & K Drum Company, and Schock (phonetic) were a few of the larger companies who brought drums to Central Steel Drum for reconditioning.

Some of the companies, including Hoffman LaRoche and National Starch, also maintained "inventories" at the facility and would buy back reconditioned drums for their own use. Under a special arrangement, when companies brought in more drums than they were taking back during a certain time period, an "inventory" would be established from which those companies could eventually take drums from. When a company maintained an inventory, this did not necessarily mean that a company would get back the same drum that they had brought in for reconditioning. Sometimes companies would, for example, transport a trailer load of drums to Central Steel Drum for reconditioning and almost immediately they would leave with a trailer load of clean reconditioned drums.

Mr. Choynowski also stated that Central Steel Drum and Bayonne Barrel and Drum (BBD) had many of the same customers. Andy Langella, son of the BBD owner Frank Langella, went to work in "Sales" at the Central Steel Drum facility following the closing of BBD's facility. Andy Langella also brought with him many of his BBD customers at that time. Mrs. Choynowski stated that she believes that BBD was a larger operation than Central Steel Drum and that she was surprised when BBD went out of business.

There were approximately 200 employees working at Central Steel Drum when the facility was fully operational. Most of these employees worked in the yard.

Central Steel Drum did not accept drums from everyone who attempted to bring drums to its facility. Companies/individuals who sought to bring drums to the facility were initially required to set up an account in the main office. Mrs. Choynowski stated that Central Steel Drum would sometimes reject or "discourage" companies/individuals from opening up accounts, although she did not state what the criterion was for evaluation or who made that decision. At the company's discretion, prices offered to these companies/individuals for their sale of drums to the facility was intentionally so low or uncompetitive that these companies/individuals were discouraged from bringing their drums to Central Steel Drum. Sometimes, companies/individuals were told that they had to pay to bring their drums to the facility, which would ultimately discourage them.

Mrs. Choynowski maintains that the owners of Central Steel Drum attempted to comply with all regulations and requests from environmental agencies. She felt that the company went bankrupt because they could no longer afford to comply with the strict requirements imposed on them by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). She gave the example of how the owner of Central Steel Drum attempted to obtain a permit to purchase a piece of equipment which he felt would be useful in the facility's operation. At the time, the piece of equipment cost X amount of dollars. The NJDEP rejected the permit application and the equipment was not purchased. A few years later, NJDEP told Central Steel Drum that they were required to purchase this same piece of equipment in order to be in compliance with state regulations. However, Mrs. Choynowski maintains, by this time the equipment had doubled in price and Central Steel Drum could no longer afford to purchase it.

Drums stored at the facility were eventually placed on trailers so that they would not touch the ground. Central Steel Drum did this to comply with environmental regulations. Mrs. Choynowski this not indicate when this practice was initiated at Central Steel Drum.

Mrs. Choynowski recalls that representatives from either EPA or NJDEP, or both, would make unannounced visits to the facility periodically. She recalls that the numerous representatives would enter the property in several cars and would conduct inspections in and around the facility wearing "white moonsuits." She stated that the manner by which the inspections were conducted frightened some of the employees, especially those employees in the office, who wondered if they should be concerned for their health.

Although Mrs. Choynowski stated that she feels that compliance with the strict environmental regulations contributed to the demise of the company's operations, she also stated that, just prior to the facility closing, the owners of Central Steel Drum were paying so much money in attorneys' fees that they were unable to continue to operate. Mrs. Choynowski stated she knows this because she used to issue the checks to the attorneys.

The documents relating to the operations of Central Steel Drum were taken out of the main office of the facility by the bankruptcy Trustees following the company's bankruptcy filing.

Mrs. Choynowski stated that Abbie Greenberg had founded Central Steel Drum "50 years ago" and that he had built the business up over the years. Mr. Greenberg's sons, she stated, eventually took over the operations of the business. She implied that the sons did not run the business as well as Mr. Greenberg had, although she did not elaborate.

Jerry Greenberg was the longtime office manager of Central Steel Drum. She worked at Central Steel Drum for many years, more than Mrs. Choynowski, and she trained Mrs. Choynowski in her various tasks. Mrs. Choynowski recommended that TRC personnel speak with Mrs. Greenberg. Mrs. Choynowski also recommended that TRC personnel speak with Norman Cohen, a longtime employee who worked in the yard, as well as Tony Mangieri, the maintenance supervisor.

Note: A Payroll Management Report, dated September 13, 1985, indicates that Mrs. Choynowski began her employment at Central Steel Drum on 3/19/79. Mrs. Choynowski was reportedly still working at Central Steel Drum as of the date of the Report.

INTERVIEW REPORT
B. C. TOLIVER
CENTRAL STEEL DRUM SITE
June 24, 1997

On June 24, 1997, Donna Murphy and Nuria Muniz of TRC Environmental Corporation (TRC) traveled to 279 Osborne Terrace, Newark, New Jersey to conduct an interview with B. C. Toliver, telephone (201) 705-3449, a former employee of Central Steel Drum. The following substantially summarizes the statements made by Mr. Toliver to TRC personnel during the interview:

Mr. Toliver worked at Central Steel Drum, located in Newark, New Jersey, for approximately 21 years, between 1972 and the facility's closing. Mr. Toliver worked as a "shop steward" in one of the facility's buildings located in the yard. His primary task involved working in an assembly line prior to the finished drums being loaded into trucks or stored at the facility. However, when the company was short employees in any given area of the facility, Mr. Toliver would float and work in those areas where needed. This gave him access and familiarity with many aspects of the facility's operations.

In addition to Mr. Toliver's employment at Central Steel Drum, he had four (4) brothers who also worked at Central Steel Drum: Earl Toliver (employed at Site 24 years); Tony Toliver; Larry Toliver; and Leroy Toliver.

When drums were brought into the facility for reconditioning, they were inspected at the front gate to determine the number of drums as well as the types of drums being brought in. There were different types of drums and each kind was separated and priced accordingly. A tally of all the drums, by type and then total, was detailed on a standardized form which was submitted to the main office at the end of the day for processing. Mr. Toliver stated that in order for a company to bring in drums, they were required to first go to the main office and set up an account. To the best of his knowledge, any company/individual was permitted to bring their drums for reconditioning to Central Steel Drum provided that the company set up an account in the main office.

Mr. Toliver estimated that approximately 300 companies brought drums to Central Steel Drum for reconditioning, however, not all companies brought drums with the same frequency or volume. Some companies came every day; other companies came only periodically. Approximately 60 different companies brought drums to the facility on any given day. As many as 3,000 drums were transported to the Site on a daily basis.

Mr. Toliver could not recall the names of any specific companies who transported drums to the Site. However, there were many types of companies, including chemical companies, food manufacturers, and drum scavengers who exclusively picked up drums from other facilities and sold them to Central Steel Drum. The drums came to the facility predominantly from New Jersey, New York and Long Island, although Mr. Toliver believes that drums were brought from other states as well.

TRC

Some of the companies both sold drums to the facility as well as purchased reconditioned drums for their own use. In this instance, the companies usually maintained an inventory of drums which meant that they received credit for the drums which they brought to the facility and in return could purchase drums as needed. Other companies exclusively sold drums to the facility; while other companies exclusively purchased drums from Central Steel Drum.

According to Mr. Toliver, all drums that came to the facility were "dirty" and contained at least some type of material or residue. There were never any drums that were full of material; the amount of material in the bottom of the drums consisted of what was left over after the contents of the drum had been used. Mr. Toliver stated that, although he could not positively identify the contents of the drums that were brought into the facility, he knew that material in the drums included chemicals. Mr. Toliver's brother, Leroy Toliver, was handling a drum prior to its cleaning and the contents, described as a "white powder," spilled out onto his thighs. The white powder then ate through his clothing and burned his legs. Mr. Toliver's brother had to receive medical attention at the hospital as a result of this accident. He recovered, however, he did not work at the facility much longer after this incident. Mr. Toliver stated that many of the workers in the yard were concerned about their safety when handling the drums prior to the reconditioning process.

When drums were brought to the Site for reconditioning, they were immediately unloaded from the transporter trucks and placed on conveyer belts. From the conveyer belts they were sent to the incinerator where the contents of the drums were burned out. This process also burned off any paint which was on the drum, stripping the drum down to the metal. Following the incinerator, the drums were then sent to the sandblaster, the "dent machine", and then the lining department. Not all of the drums required lining. It depended upon the specifications of the prospective drum purchasers and how many were required. The drums were then sent for painting, and nearly all of the drums were painted. Following the painting process, the drums were then loaded into trailers and ready for delivery. Drums that were not suitable for reconditioning were cut up and disposed of.

Mr. Toliver described the incinerator as the "worst" of all of the operations in terms of health and safety. The incinerator created a lot of fumes which often worried Mr. Toliver and others. Under the incinerator was a collection pan which caught any debris/waste that had not been burned by the incineration process. This collection pan was periodically cleaned and the contents disposed of.

Central Steel Drum conducted business with Bayonne Barrel and Drum (BBD), located in Bayonne, New Jersey, from time to time. Sometimes Central Steel Drum would accept dirty drums from BBD for reconditioning and sometimes BBD would recondition drums for Central Steel Drum. Mr. Toliver does not know if any formal agreement existed between the two companies, however, he believes that the companies helped each other out when, for example, the incinerator would break down. In addition, numerous BBD employees went to work at Central Steel Drum following BBD's closing.

TRC

Mr. Toliver recommended that TRC personnel speak with the following individuals who would be knowledgeable concerning operations at the Site: Richard Hooker (201) 242-6747; Earl Toliver (201) 926-2962; and John Gibson (former supervisor at the Site). Earl Toliver worked in the front of the yard and would be knowledgeable concerning the number and identity of companies who brought their drums to Central Steel Drum for reconditioning.

Mr. Toliver stated that all of the individuals he recommended TRC speak with currently work at a facility which is owned and operated by the "owners of Central Steel Drum." This facility, which he described as a similar business but under a different name, is located in Hillside, New Jersey. Mr. Toliver did not specify the name of the new facility or identify the specific names of the owners who currently operate this facility.

Mr. Toliver stated that he possesses some papers in his home concerning Central Steel Drum. Although he does not recall the exact nature of the papers he possesses, he believes some of them may identify one or more companies who brought drums to the facility for reconditioning. He stated that he does not know why he took the papers but does recall seeing them in his home at some point. Mr. Toliver will attempt to find the papers and stated that he would contact TRC personnel when he determines the nature of the papers.

Note: A Payroll Management Report, dated September 13, 1985, indicates that Mr. Toliver began his employment at Central Steel Drum on 8/28/72. Mr. Toliver also had three (3) brothers listed in the Report along with their respective dates of employment as follows: Tony Toliver (11/7/83); Larry Toliver (11/15/84); and Earl Toliver (10/16/69). Leroy Toliver was not listed in the Report. Mr. Toliver and his brothers, excluding Leroy Toliver, were reportedly still working at Central Steel Drum as of the date of the Report.

How were
contents
disposed
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TRC

**INTERVIEW REPORT
AVELINO F. COELHO
CENTRAL STEEL DRUM SITE
June 25, 1997**

On June 25, 1997, Donna Murphy and Nuria Muniz of TRC Environmental Corporation (TRC) traveled to 2687 Bancroft Avenue, Union, New Jersey to conduct an interview with Avelino F. Coelho, telephone (908) 688-3723, a former employee of Central Steel Drum. Also present during the interview were Mr. Coelho's wife and son, who provided a majority of the translation as Portuguese is Mr. Coelho's native language. The following substantially summarizes the statements made by Mr. Coelho:

Mr. Coelho worked at Central Steel Drum, located in Newark, New Jersey, for approximately seven years, beginning in 1978. To provide a time frame by which Mr. Coelho ceased working at Central Steel Drum, he recalled that it was sometime after a fire which occurred at the facility. He stated that his reason for leaving Central Steel Drum was because he was offered a new job with better benefits. Mr. Coelho worked in the main yard and one of his responsibilities was in the "cutting" area where the tops of drums were cut off prior to being reconditioned. Mr. Coelho explained that the lids of some drums had to be cut because they were unable to be otherwise removed, due to denting or welding.

There were approximately 100 employees working at Central Steel Drum during the time that Mr. Coelho worked there. Most of these employees worked in the yard.

Although Mr. Coelho worked in the main yard, he stated that his responsibilities did not give him prolonged access to the front gate where drums were initially brought. As such, Mr. Coelho could not recall the names of specific companies who brought drums into the facility for reconditioning. To the best of his knowledge, more smaller companies/individuals brought drums to the facility than big companies. The smaller companies were those whose business it was to collect drums from other companies in the area and then sell them to Central Steel Drum. Mr. Coelho estimated that there were approximately 50 companies who brought drums to Central Steel Drum on a regular basis.

Approximately 1000-1500 drums were transported to the Site for reconditioning on a daily basis. Mr. Coelho based this on his recollection that there was approximately one trailer load of 240 drums brought to the Site and unloaded every hour. The facility was open Monday through Friday and sometimes on Saturday. Although the facility was normally open during the day, Mr. Coelho recall that the facility would sometimes be open at night, but only for minor repainting of drums.

The drums that were transported to the facility for reconditioning were "dirty" and contained "a lot of chemicals." Other drums contained glues, paint, or food waste. Mr. Coelho never observed drums that appeared to be full upon entering the facility; they usually contained just a small amount of material.

TRC

When the drums were brought in, the employees would routinely lay the drums on their side and stack them in a pyramid fashion prior to being sent to the incinerator. This enabled them to stack more drums in an area and reduce the likelihood that the drums would fall over. By stacking the drums on their side, the contents of the drums would spill onto the ground. Mr. Coelho recalled that there appeared to be no effort to prevent or contain these spills.

Mr. Coelho stated that during the time he worked at Central Steel Drum, employees who handled the drums prior to reconditioning would wear protective boots, gloves, and hard hats. He recalled that the area where the drums were stacked would become so saturated with liquid that sometimes his boots got stuck in the ground. Mr. Coelho stated that he always wore protective clothing while at work. He recalled that some employees were injured while working at the facility, however, he did not elaborate on specific injuries or the cause of those injuries. Mr. Coelho did not sustain any substantial injuries while working at Central Steel Drum.

When drums first entered the facility, they were unloaded from their transporter trucks, inventoried and then stacked prior to being reconditioned. The drums were then incinerated to remove all of the material and excess paint in/on them. Following incineration, the drums were sandblasted, polished and finally repainted.

Mr. Coelho does not know if Central Steel Drum conducted business with Bayonne Barrel and Drum Company, located in Bayonne, New Jersey, or if both companies had the same drum customers.

Mr. Coelho recommended that TRC personnel speak with Victor Mendes and Vasco Mendes, both former employees of the Site who would be familiar with the facility's operations. Victor Mendes resides in Union, New Jersey; Vasco Mendes resides at 106 Monroe Street, Elizabeth, New Jersey. Manuel Felicio, another former employee, died approximately 2 years ago.

Note: A Payroll Management Report, dated September 13, 1985, indicates that Mr. Coelho began his employment at Central Steel Drum on 2/16/78. Mr. Coelho's date of termination is reported as 5/22/85.

INTERVIEW REPORT
JOHN SCUORZO / JOHN SCUORZO III
CENTRAL STEEL DRUM SITE
June 25, 1997

On June 25, 1997, Donna Murphy and Nuria Muniz of TRC Environmental Corporation (TRC) traveled to 142 N. 21st Street, Kenilworth, New Jersey to conduct an interview with John Scuorzo, telephone (908) 272-6145, a former employee of Central Steel Drum. At that time, John Scuorzo III, Mr. Scuorzo's son, also a former employee of Central Steel Drum, was present. The following substantially summarizes the statements made by Mr. Scuorzo and Mr. Scuorzo III to TRC personnel during the interview:

Mr. Scuorzo declined to speak to TRC personnel about the Central Steel Drum facility and his former employment at the facility stating, "it was a long time ago" and "in the past." Mr. Scuorzo did not comment any further.

Mr. Scuorzo III also declined to speak to TRC personnel and further stated that we would have to contact his attorney if we wished to ask him any questions concerning the Central Steel Drum facility. He also stated that if he agreed to speak about the Central Steel Drum facility that he wanted to be compensated for his time and also receive written guarantees of "immunity." Mr. Scuorzo stated that he has been contacted in the past regarding the Site, although he did not reveal who had previously contacted him.

TRC personnel declined Mr. Scuorzo's offer for his attorney's name and telephone number. Mr. Scuorzo, however, demanded that TRC personnel provide him with a business card for identification. Nuria Muniz, Associate Scientist, gave Mr. Scuorzo her TRC business card.

Note: A Payroll Management Report, dated September 13, 1985, indicates that Mr. Scuorzo began his employment at Central Steel Drum on 11/26/84. Mr. Scuorzo III began his employment at the facility on 6/24/85. Mr. Scuorzo and Mr. Scuorzo III were reportedly still working at Central Steel Drum as of the date of the Report.

Question
what happened
to contents of
drawings
Answer stated
below

**ACTIVITY REPORT
ALVARO OLIVEIRA
CENTRAL STEEL DRUM SITE
June 24, 1997**

On June 24, 1997, Donna Murphy and Nuria Muniz of TRC Environmental Corporation (TRC) traveled to 293 Lafayette Street, Newark, New Jersey to conduct an interview with Alvaro Oliveira, telephone (201) 344-3692, a former employee of Central Steel Drum.

TRC personnel spoke to Mr. Oliveira's wife and daughter who stated that Mr. Oliveira is deceased. Mr. Oliveira's daughter confirmed that her father formerly worked at Central Steel Drum.

**ACTIVITY REPORT
STANLEY R. PAWELEK
CENTRAL STEEL DRUM SITE
June 25, 1997**

On June 25, 1997, Donna Murphy and Nuria Muniz of TRC Environmental Corporation (TRC) traveled to 1129 Maurice Avenue, Clark, New Jersey to conduct an interview with Stanley R. Pawelek, telephone (908) 388-0579, a former employee of Central Steel Drum.

TRC personnel observed that Mr. Pawelek's residence appeared to be vacant and there was a Realtor sign on the lawn. TRC personnel spoke to the neighbor next door to Mr. Pawelek's home, No. 1123 Maurice Avenue, who stated that Mr. Pawelek is deceased. The neighbor confirmed that Mr. Pawelek formerly worked at Central Steel Drum.